

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 02557 081034Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 COME-00 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AGRE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
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R 080905Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 433
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRD, CB, SN
SUBJECT: SINGAPORE DELEGATION'S VISIT TO CAMBODIA

REF: SINGAPORE 2258

1. SUMMARY45HEAD OF GOS TRADING COMPANY INTRACO HAS
GIVEN US FURTHER DETAILS ON LAST MONTH'S VISIT BY SINGAPORE
DELEGATION TO CAMBODIA. INTRACO PLANS TO SEND A SMALL SHIP TO
KAMPONG SOM SOON TO TEST CAMBODIAN ABILITY TO SUPPLY
PRODUCTS OF INTEREST TO SINGAPORE. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING DISCUSSIONS ON JUNE 5, CHANDRA DAS,
DIRECTOR OF THE GOS TRADING COMPANY INTRACO, TOLD
EMBASSY OFFICERS HE WAS NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT
THE VOLUME OF TRADE THAT WILL RESULT FROM THE
MID-MAY TALKS HELD IN PHNOM PENH. (CHANDRA DAS WAS
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PAGE 02 SINGAP 02557 081034Z

A MEMBER OF THE GOS DELEGATION REFERRED TO IN REFTEL.)
HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT WHILE THE TWO COUNTRIES HAD
AGREED TO TRADE TERMS WHEREBY INTRACO WOULD PURCHASE
AGRICULTURAL AND FISHERY PRODUCTS FROM CAMBODIA WITH
PAYMENTS HELD BY THE COMPANY AS CREDITS AGAINST WHICH
THE CAMBODIANS COULD MAKE PURCHASES, TRANSPORT
SHORTAGES IN CAMBODIA MIGHT DELAY THE DELIVERY OF

SUCH PRODUCTS TO THE PORT OF KAMPONG SOM. CHANDRA DAS HAD SOUGHT PERMISSION TO VISIT THE PORT CITY BUT HIS REQUEST WAS DENIED ON GROUNDS OF SECURITY. HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT THE CAMBODIANS MEANT IN THEIR USE OF THE TERM BUT DID NOT PRESS THE POINT. HE DID OBSERVE, DURING AN OVER-THE-ROAD TRIP TO ANKOR WAT, THAT THE CAMBODIANS WERE RELYING ON VINTAGE U.S.-PRODUCED TRUCKS WHICH CARRIED SPARE PARTS OBVIOUSLY CANNIBALIZED FROM SISTER VEHICLES. THE VEHICLE CARRYING THE SINGAPOREANS BROKE DOWN SEVERAL TIMES EN ROUTE AND EVENTUALLY, TO THE DISMAY AND LOSS OF FACE TO THEIR HOSTS, HAD TO BE TOWED.

3. CHANDRA DAS WAS SURPRISED TO SEE CLOSED SHOPS IN PHNOM PENH WITH GOODS STILL ON THEIR SHELVES AND NEW MERCEDES AUTOMOBILES STILL IN PLACE AT THE DEALERSHIP. HE NOTED THE STREETS OF THE CAPITAL WERE ALMOST EMPTY AND REACHED THE CONCLUSION THE FORMER POPULACE OF THE CITY HAD NOT BEEN FOREWARNED OF THEIR RELOCATION BUT HAD BEEN ASSEMBLED ON THE PRETENSE OF ATTENDING A PUBLIC MEETING AND SUBSEQUENTLY CARTED OFF TO THE HINTERLAND. THE SINGAPOREANS OBSERVED PEOPLE AT WORK IN THE FIELDS AND CONSTRUCTION OF WELL-DESIGNED, SINGLE FAMILY UNITS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CAPITAL. THEY VISITED A PLYWOOD FACTORY AND OTHER SMALL INDUSTRIES IN WHAT WAS APPARENTLY AN INDUSTRIAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 SINGAP 02557 081034Z

TRACT NEAR PHNOM PENH. CHANDRA DAS WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE BUSINESS ACUMEN OF THE CAMBODIAN NEGOTIATORS. CAMBODIAN OFFICIALS THROUGHOUT THE VISIT PERSISTED IN USING THE TERMS "COMMITTEE" AND "CHAIRMAN", WHICH THE SINGAPOREANS ROUGHLY EQUATED TO "MINISTRY" AND "MINISTER".

4. TO TEST THE CAMBODIAN'S ABILITY TO DELIVER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS, INTRACO PLANS TO SEND, WITHIN THE NEAR FUTURE, A 500-TON VESSEL TO KAMPONG SOM. THE VESSEL WILL DEPART FROM SINGAPORE WITHOUT CARGO AND TRAVEL DIRECTLY TO CAMBODIA. INTRACO IS APPARENTLY WILLING TO ACCEPT WHATEVER IS LOADED ON THE SHIP. CHANDRA DAS POINTED OUT THAT THE CAMBODIANS HAD ASKED IF INTRACO COULD SUPPLY THEM WITH PETROLEUM PRODUCTS AND THAT THE SINGAPOREANS HAD DECLINED. HE TOLD THEM THAT THE GOS WOULD PREFER NOT TO INCLUDE PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN THE SEMI-BARTER TRADING ARRANGEMENTS BEING NEGOTIATED (NOTING TO US THAT PAYMENT IS NOW BEING MADE FOR THESE PRODUCTS IN HARD CURRENCY THROUGH HONG KONG, AND THAT HE PREFERRED TO LEAVE IT THAT WAY). INTRACO HAD RAISED THE

POSSIBILITY OF TRADING IN RUBBER, BUT IT APPEARED
THE CAMBODIAN RUBBER CROP WAS ALREADY OBLIGATED TO
THE PRC.

5. REGARDING INTRACO TRADE WITH VIETNAM, CHANDRA
DAS SAID HE HAD SENT A REPRESENTATIVE TO HANOI IN
LATE MARCH OF THIS YEAR. AS AN ASIDE, HE MENTIONED THAT
THE REPRESENTATIVE WAS FORCED TO TRAVEL VIA MOSCOW
FOR LACK OF A MORE DIRECT ROUTE. HE AFFIRMED THAT
INTRACO HAD AGREED TO ESTABLISH A TRADE OFFICE
IN HANOI BUT STATED HE WOULD NOT SEND ANY OF HIS
PERSONNEL THERE UNTIL THE VIETNAMESE COULD
GUARANTEE SIX ROOMS TO COVER LIVING QUARTERS AND OFFICE SPACE.
IN SPITE OF OUR QUESTIONING, CHANDRA DAS AVOIDED SPECIFYING
THE ITEMS DESIRED BY THE CAMBODIANS AND VIETNAMESE. WHEN ASKED
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PAGE 04 SINGAP 02557 081034Z

HOW THE CAMBODIANS PLANNED TO PLACE THEIR ORDERS AND WHETHER
CAMBODIANS WOULD TRAVEL TO SINGAPORE FOR PERIODIC PURCHASING
TRIPS, CHANDRA DAS SAID THAT THE CAMBODIANS KNOW WHAT SINGAPORE
HAS TO OFFER AND WILL ORDER THROUGH THE RECENTLY REINSTATED
COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS.
HOLDRIDGE

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